

Greenway Blues

Future of The Rose Kennedy Greenway Uncertain

The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, a private non-profit 501(c)3 corporation, was established by the State Legislature in 2008, after protracted political infighting, to manage, maintain and improve the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway parks. These parks are built mostly on the roof of the Tip O'Neill (Central Artery) highway tunnels. The legislation gave the Conservancy a five-year lease and provided for a one-for-one match of State dollars with private contributions up to \$5.5 million per year.

The political infighting had to do with who would control and maintain the 14 acres of parks in the heart of Downtown Boston. No one—not the State highway or parks agencies and certainly not the City—wanted the parks due to the maintenance requirements.

However, the State share from a designated account never materialized, and instead a smaller contribution (about 40 percent of total income has come from Mass. Department of Transportation (DOT), partly "in-kind" rather than cash, such as rent-free office space for the Conservancy at 185 Kneeland St. The remainder of its funding comes from private donations and other income.

The five-year lease will end in June 2013. Earlier this year Secretary of Transportation Richard Davey, out of the blue, sent an ultimatum to the Conservancy stating that renewal of the lease must include a steady decrease in DOT contributions to zero in the fifth year. In essence, the Greenway would become unique:

a State park with no State funding.

Several studies by consultants (some recommended by Secretary Davey) concluded that if the State stopped all support, private contributions would also dry up and the proposed Business Improvement District (BID), by which businesses adjacent to the Greenway would provide funding and had been brought close to fruition by the Conservancy, would not happen.

After Secretary Davey's ultimatum, the Conservancy prepared a five-year budget which reduced the DOT contribution to \$1 million in the fifth year. This has been rejected by Davey, who insists it must be zero. The future of the Conservancy and the Greenway, which has been brought to a high standard of maintenance, quality and improvement, is now in limbo.

To add to the Greenway Conservancy woes, legislation filed by State Representative Aaron Michlewitz (D-North End) was signed into law (Ch. 306, Section 8B) requiring the Greenway Conservancy to be subject to the Open Meeting Law and Public Records Law. The Greenway Conservancy is the only non-profit organization in the state subject to these laws that are intended to ensure that the public has access to considerations and data underlying governmental decisions. (The State Legislature exempted itself from these laws, ironically.) The new Open Meeting Law including the Greenway Conservancy has taken effect; the change to the Public Records Law will take effect on January 1, 2013.



Southwest Corridor Park, 52 acres between Back Bay and Jamaica Plain, offers insight into how the state has previously dealt with operating and maintaining an urban linear park. The Southwest Corridor Park—the only other state-owned (Division of Conservation and Recreation) urban park within one political district (Boston)—is in its 23d year and some of its systems and materials are reaching the end of their useful life. This includes irrigation systems, paving, fencing, landscaping and signage.

The original owner/manager was MDC (now DCR) and at its inception had a budget for a maintenance crew of 8-plus and funding for local subcontractors for mowing, pruning, landscape maintenance, painting, etc. The current staff is 2 full-time people and is part of the DCR Urban Park group which has minimal resources to deal with some of the aging systems. Community groups and the Southwest Corridor Conservancy—established in 2004 to deal with declining resources—have dealt with day-to-day maintenance issues for the 4.7-mile park. A new plan may be needed before this asset is diminished beyond total replacement.



Library

Boston Architectural College

BRA to Initiate Downtown Waterfront District Municipal Harbor Plan and Greenway District Zoning Analysis

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) just completed a lengthy process to hire a consultant to assist it prepare a new Downtown Waterfront District Municipal Harbor Plan and [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] Greenway District Zoning Analysis. Utile, Inc., was selected from four teams (the other teams

were Fort Point Associates; Fort Hill/Alex Krieger/Crosby Schlessinger Smallridge; and Sasaki). BRA Board approval is expected December 13. Utile prepared the Greenway District Study in 2010 that established guidelines for the area. An Advisory Committee will be selected by the BRA and there will be many public meetings.



The RFP has three basic parts:

- A Watersheet Activation and Public Realm Plan for the Downtown Waterfront District;
- A Municipal Harbor Plan for the Downtown Waterfront District for submission to the State Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for review and approval; and
- A study of existing zoning and land use controls in the Greenway District and assessment of options for codifying with zoning the Greenway District Study Guidelines.

The Downtown Waterfront District encompasses the area on the harbor side of the Greenway from Long Wharf to the Hook Lobster site at the Evelyn Moakley Bridge. Key development sites are the Marriott Long Wharf Hotel, the New England Aquarium, the Harbor Garage and Hook Lobster. All of the waterfront parcels in the District are subject to the Commonwealth's Public Waterfront Act, Chapter 91, which establishes specific building height, setback and use requirements to ensure new waterfront projects and development serve a proper public purpose and support water-dependent uses. The last Municipal Harbor Plan was completed in 1991. The Greenway District Study prepared in 2010 by Utile covered the areas adjacent to the Greenway for its entire length from the North End to Chinatown.

The expected fee for the whole project is \$300,000, and the project is expected to be done in 18–24 months. A warning to neighborhood activists. Like all Municipal Harbor Plans, the RFP includes provision for substitutions, amplifications and off-setting measures, so don't assume that the final issued plan is the last word. "It's not over 'til it's over."

Jackson Square Development Creating a Neighborhood

Change Comes 25 Years After Orange Line Opened

Drivers, cyclists, residents and transit riders see Jackson Square on the Roxbury-Jamaica Plain border change daily. Designated master developer in 2005 by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the Jackson Square Partners LLC—a collaboration of Urban Edge Housing Corp., Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp. with Mitchell Properties, and Hyde Square Task Force—is well underway with the first mixed-use building set to transform the area. Jackson Square was transformed once before in the mid-1960s when dozens of buildings were demolished in preparation for I-95.

But the highway was cancelled in 1972, the Orange Line relocated to the former Penn Central right of way from Washington Street, and plans for redeveloping over six acres of land were created.

Not much happened to advance development of the vacant land until Urban Edge, fresh from developing the former Egleston Square Orange Line station a mile away, began a planning effort in 1995 with stakeholders including abutters, businesses, residents and agencies. Urban Edge did not own any land in Jackson Square—land was still primarily owned by the state after being taken for construction of I-95.

Working with Stull and Lee, architects and planners who had been instrumental in planning the Southwest Corridor after the highway was cancelled, Urban Edge spent several years to develop a plan for the public land in Jackson Square. After spending its

own money to do basic neighborhood planning typically the responsibility of the BRA, the BRA took over, advertised for development on the parcels, and designated Jackson Square Partners. The key elements of Phase I are shown on the site plan below and include:

- A 103-unit residential and retail complex at 225 Centre St., next to the Orange Line station;
- Jackson Commons, a complex of apartments and retail space across Columbus Avenue that will incorporate the current Urban Edge building.
- 38,000-s.f. ice rink/turf field and recreation center at the corner of Ritchie Street and Columbus Avenue.

Phase II includes more units on land adjacent to Amory Street. Both phases are expected to create close to 400 mixed-income housing units at this transit node.

In 2008, the Jackson Square project was designated a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Neighborhood Development Pilot Project—one of the first in the country. The designation recognizes the project's integration of sustainability and smart-growth principles, including locating at transit nodes; reducing parking; access to jobs without needing a car; and green building and green infrastructure practices.

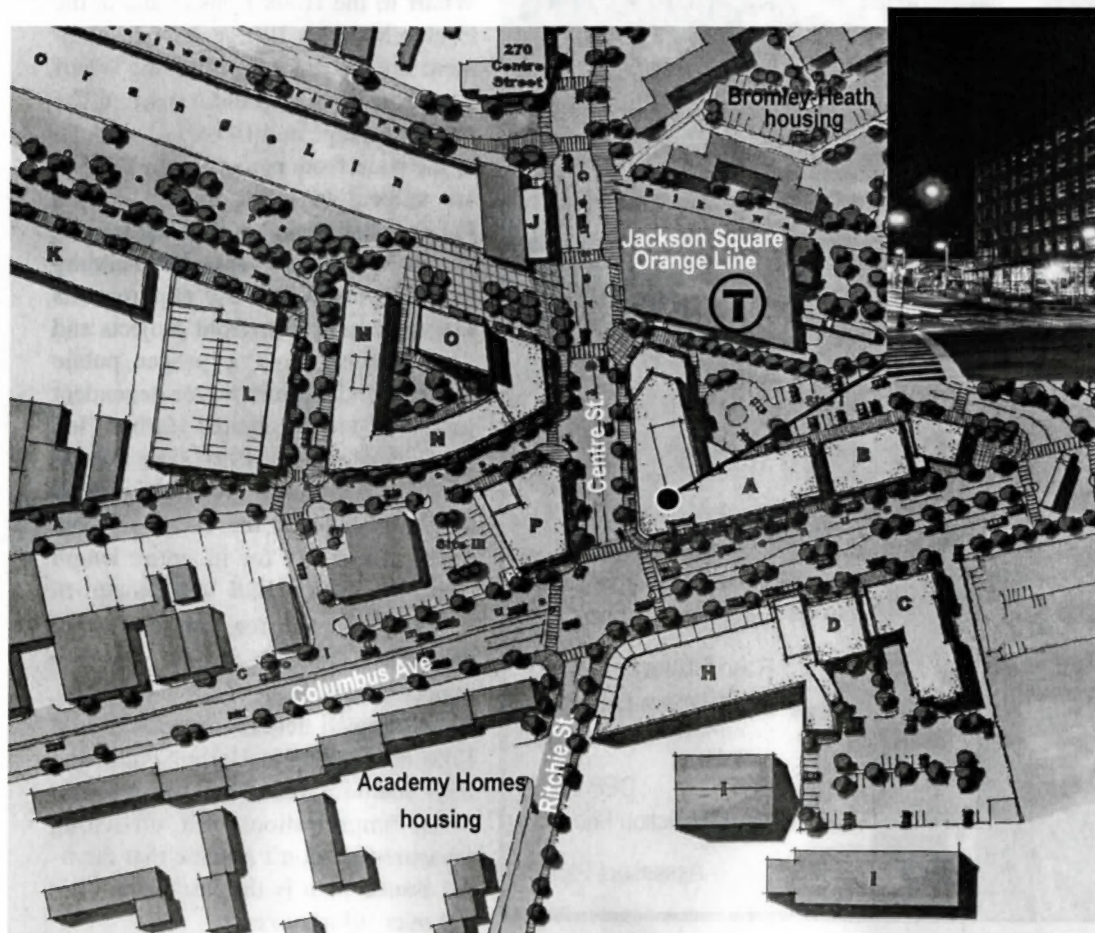


Photo: Petr Metlicka/www.metlickaphotography.com

BRA to Acquire a Navy—The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) has received a \$1.28 million federal grant to buy or have built two ferry boats to provide service between South Boston, East Boston and Charlestown. Part of the rationale is to encourage more housing development in East Boston for workers in the growing South Boston Seaport (Innovation) District. The BRA will issue two RFPs, one for acquiring the boats, the other for hiring ferry operators. Developers of wharves in South and East Boston have committed to providing more than \$8 million for port construction and ferry operations. However, the BRA does not have any permanent source for operating funds and hopes to get grants and/or subsidies in the future when plans are closer to maturity. The new service could be launched by the end of 2013 if all goes well.

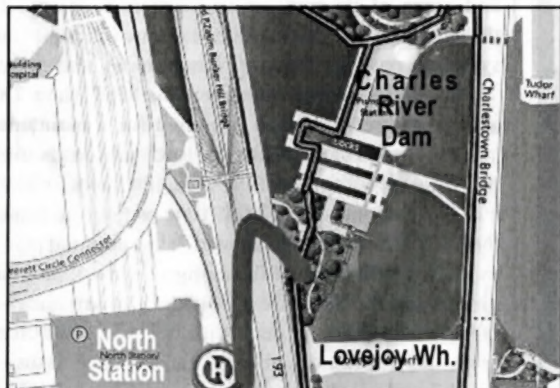
It is worth noting that the existing ferry services run by the MBTA have serious financial problems, including \$9.4 million required for short-term repairs to ferry facilities and another \$6.6 million for long-term issues. The MBTA proposed dropping nearly all ferry service to save money during this year's financial crisis.



Boston receives grant for ferries between East Boston and South Boston. Vessels have not been selected and may differ from photo.

Hidden Big Dig Path—A seemingly forgotten path connection to North Station was opened in August with little fanfare and no signs indicating where the path leads. Closed for years to all but "authorized vehicles," the area under the Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge from Lovejoy Wharf at the Charles River Dam locks was paved and lushly landscaped this summer.

The path provides shortcut access to the TDBank Garden and North Station by not walking to Causeway Street.



What's Up?

Northern Avenue Bridge Deja Vu All Over Again

—Over the past 20 years the City has promoted several proposals for the Old Northern Avenue Swing Bridge, now usable only by pedestrians and cyclists. Proposals included: demolition; restoration; or demolition and a replacement bridge.

The most elaborate, proposed by Mayor Menino and former Boston Public Works Commissioner Casazza in 2003, involved raising and fixing (it would no longer swing open) the main span to the same height as the neighboring Evelyn Moakley Bridge, with the side spans sloping down to street level. There would be three 22-foot lanes, one for pedestrians, one for an art gallery and sculpture garden and one for vehicles. The projected cost in 2003 was \$35 million, and the money was never found, so nothing happened.

Fast forward to 2012. The Boston Redevelopment Authority is proposing a five-year plan to redesign and rebuild the bridge along the same lines as the 2003 plan, providing for vehicular traffic and pedestrians and bicycles.

Meanwhile, the Boston Committee of the Garden Club of America awarded The Boston Harbor Association a \$50,000 grant to install a horticultural display on the bridge, "Harbor-Link Gardens." Landscape architect Warner Larson will provide pro bono design services using hardy seaside plants, horticultural signs and colored pavement surfacing. Comparison has been made to the Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls, MA, on an abandoned railroad bridge.

As with the 2003 plan, there is no funding in sight.



Source: Schwartz Silver and FST (2003)

2003 concept for Northern Avenue Bridge rehabilitation

PEOPLE MOVERS

Brian Swett, from Boston Properties to Boston chief of Environment and Energy.

Sheila Dillon, from DHCD to Chief of Housing and Director of DND.

Tom Lisco has left the Central Transportation Planning Staff.

Tom Glynn, from JFK School of Government to Massport CEO.

Dean Groves, from Fay, Spofford & Thorndike to URS.

Lydia Rivera, after 23 years at MBTA Communications, has started LydRiv Communications.

Beverly Scott, from general manager of the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority to MBTA General Manager. She will be the MBTA's first female general manager.

Mike Leone, Massport director of the Port of Boston, retired.

Died: Jane Holtz Kay, author of "Lost Boston," "Preserving New England" and "Asphalt Nation," and contributor to many local media, including The Boston Informer.

Died: Dave Davis, former budget director of Mayor White's Little City Hall program, Executive Director of the BRA's Economic Development and Industrial Com-

THE BOSTON INFORMER

A publication of ATC Information, Inc.

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The goal is simple: Provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The Boston Informer is published electronically by ATC Information, Inc., five times yearly in Boston, Mass. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

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Over 20 years of *The Boston Informer*, we realized we've written the same articles about proposed projects over and over again...



"This year, next year, sometime, never?"

You Were Asking

Q. There is a race going on in the world, mainly between China and some wealthy Middle East countries to build the first "mile-high" building. Will Mayor Menino enter the race by enlarging his dormant plan to build a 1,000 ft. tower in Winthrop Square?

A. It would certainly be an impressive legacy for his longest-ever term as Mayor.

Q. Where will the Edgar Allen Poe statue be installed?

A. The Edgar Allen Poe Foundation is currently raising money to install a life-size bronze statue of the writer



in Poe Square, at the corner of Charles Street South and Boylston Street. Artist Stefanie Rocknak, a sculptor and professor of philosophy in New York, calls the piece *Poe Returning to Boston*. The City's Browne Fund provided money for planning and artist selection, and the Foundation is raising money for the \$125,000 statue.

See info@poeboston.org for information and to donate.

Q. I hear there's a debate about the best color for detectable warning strips at pedestrian ramps. What gives?

A. The Back Bay Architectural Commission met in November with the Mayor's Office and Dept. of Public Works to review the City's recommended color and material for detectable warning strips at pedestrian ramps at Back Bay intersections. These strips aid sight-impaired persons and the general public. The City's Commission for Persons with Disabilities and neighborhood groups attended. The BBAC amended its earlier approval for a yellow strip in favor of a brick red color panel which is to be consistent at all of the City Architectural districts (Beacon Hill, South End, etc.).

Stressing that City intersections have many issues that affect accessibility, the BBAC pushed Public Works to work with the Commission to make each intersection work properly, considering other intersection street furniture (drains, lights, signs, etc.) and it agreed to continue to work with Public Works at individual intersections under repair. Finally, it was agreed that ramps rebuilt on Boylston Street would be treated the same on both sides of Boylston Street despite the south side not being in the District.